DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 351 100 PS 020 695

AUTHOR Goffin, Stacie G.
TITLE The Metropolitan Council on Child Care: Conceptualizing a Framework for Early Childhood Professional Preparation and Development.
INSTITUTION Metropolitan Council on Child Care, Kansas City, KS.
PUB DATE 4 Jun 92
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of NAEYC's National Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development (1st, Los Angeles, CA, June 4, 1992).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141). -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Agency Cooperation; Child Advocacy; *Day Care; *Early Childhood Education; *Educational Cooperation; Educational Planning; *Educational Quality; Elementary Education; *Professional Development; Referral; *Teacher Education
IDENTIFIERS *Kansas City Metropolitan Council on Child Care KS

ABSTRACT

This paper describes the mission, history, current activities, and accomplishments of the Kansas City Metropolitan Council on Child Care. Created in 1989, the council represents a collaborative effort among representatives from local, state, and federal governments; business, labor, and community interests; and early childhood workers from public schools, Head Start, and public, private, and family-based programs. The council serves as a catalyst for: (1) constructing a system of high quality early childhood care and education for children from birth through age 12 in an 8-county area in Kansas and Missouri; (2) coordinating a system of professional preparation and development; (3) conceptualizing a metropolitan-wide system of resource and referral; and (4) creating a centralized vehicle for public information and policy analysis. The council has assessed the characteristics of those providing care and education to children in the area and completed a survey of professional development opportunities in the metropolitan community. In addition, the council has delineated specializations within the field of early childhood care and education and school-age child care in terms of the relationships among three criteria: the developmental characteristics of the learner, professional roles, and the program setting. Efforts of the council to provide financial support for early childhood professional development, and particularly the establishment of an Early Childhood Development Fund, are detailed. (SM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED351100

The Metropolitan Council on Child Care: Conceptualizing a Framework for Early Childhood Professional Preparation and Development

Stacie G. Goffin

Chairperson, Metropolitan Council on Child Care

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Stacie G. Goffin
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

PS 020695

presentation at the First Annual Conference of NAEYC's National Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development, Los Angeles, CA, June 4, 1992.

copyright: Metropolitan Council on Child Care

Kansas City's Metropolitan Council on Child Care is an exciting, dynamic, and developmental undertaking. We are attempting to create a shared vision; hence, our effort involves a complicated mixture that addresses both process and outcome. I have organized my remarks into four parts: (1) introductory remarks about the Council and its mission, which provides the context for our efforts in early childhood professional preparation and development; (2) an overview of the history of our deliberations regarding professional preparation and development; (3) a description of our current activity in this arena which, we believe, integrates the focal issues in ways that are uniquely respectful and cohesive, and (4) a review of our accomplishments to date, framed within the context of the Council and its mission.

The Metropolitan Council on Child Care

The Metropolitan Council on Child Care, which was created in January, 1989, is a collaborative effort. It is the outgrowth of a community grassroots organization that had chosen child care as an issue for study. Participants in the collaboration include representatives from local, state, and federal government, business and labor interests, civic and community organizations, and early childhood representatives from public schools, Head Start, public and private center and family based programs that are both secular and religious.

These sectors have been intentionally targeted to ensure that the Council's membership is representative of the constituents of

early childhood care and education. We believe this diverse membership is requisite to accomplishing the Council's mission. We view the availability of quality early care and education as a community responsibility, and this premise is directly linked to our decision that the community must be involved in defining the issues and constructing meaningful solutions.

The mission of the Council is to serve as a catalyst for the construction of system of high quality early childhood care and education for children birth to age 8 years and through age 12 for school age child care. It is a regional, bi-state (Kansas and Missouri) effort that traverses an eight county area.

The Council is under the auspices of the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC), a bi-state voluntary coalition of governments from the region's eight counties. MARC is governed by a Board of Directors composed of more than thirty elected officials from the region's county and city governments. Although our relationship with MARC has considerable potential for linking and integrating our efforts with those of the region's local governments, the Council is not a government entity. We are currently supported financially by several of the region's funders: the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation and Affiliated Trusts; The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, and The Hall Family Foundations. During our first two years, we also received financial and volunteer support from the Junior League of Kansas City, MO.

The Council focuses on systemic issues. It does not provide any direct services. This is a critical, distinguishing

characteristic of the Council and its efforts and preceded the national thrust now given to systems and collaborations. To understand and appreciate our efforts regarding professional preparation and development necessitates an understanding of this systemic and comprehensive focus. It is also important to realize that the Council is attempting to articulate a plan of early childhood professional preparation and development in terms of how we think the profession ought to be conceptualized. This differs from efforts in other communities and states that are focusing on linking and coordinating existing services and programs.

The Council's structure includes approximately twenty-five governing board members and four work groups comprised of over 150 individuals. The 175-plus members involved with the Council represent the diversity previously described. Our systemic focus is targeted toward resource and referral, professional preparation and development, and public information and policy analysis. We see these as the essential three elements of the infrastructure of early childhood care and education and school age child care.

History of the Council's Effort in Developing a Plan for Professional Preparation and Development

Most of us are familiar with the fact that the field of early childhood care and education has been, and continues to be, undergoing a tremendous expansion and differentiation. We are now a field with numerous role options or specializations which are implemented in a variety of different settings, often with differing purposes. The Council believes this diversity of roles

and purposes needs to be reflected in any discussion of professional development.

The Professional Preparation and Development (PP&D) Work Group has been active since the Council's inception in 1989. It has been charged with the responsibility of conceptualizing and eventually implementing a comprehensive and coordinated system of early childhood professional preparation and development. The members of this work group include family child care providers, Head Start and center, and school-based, teachers and directors serving infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school-agers in for-profit and not-for-profit, and religious and secular programs, staff from resource and referral agencies, faculty from vocational, CDA, two-year, and four-year teacher preparation programs, and parents and volunteers.

During our first three years, various subcommittees developed the Council's popular brochure entitled "Achieving Quality in Early Childhood Care and Education Programs: Guidelines for the Profession"; completed a survey of professional development opportunities in the metropolitan community; developed a two-part survey to assess the characteristics of those providing care and education to children in the metropolitan community; and took first steps toward developing consistent professional terminology for the community.

These discrete activities were designed to help inform the group's decision-making, modify the community's understanding of the issues, and develop our working relationships with each other. Concurrently, the work group began deliberating a plan for

professional preparation and development. These initial discussions relied heavily upon NAEYC's first draft of a professional development plan. NAEYC's first draft (and second draft, although this draft attracted limited discussion from the PP&D development work group) conceptualized early childhood professional preparation and development in terms of a single career ladder and a linear, hierarchial relationship among the various professional roles. Those roles traditionally requiring less formalized professional education were at the bottom of the ladder, and those currently requiring more were at the top of the ladder. And, references to family child care and school age child care were absent.

This conceptualization of the profession with its tiered system of professional status became increasingly problematic for those involved in these preliminary discussions. As a result, during 1991, the PP & D work group re-examined its premises and reformulated a professional development plan based upon the essential premise that each role within the profession is of equal importance and that the various settings for early childhood care and education are equally valid. In addition, each professional role is seen as having a specialized and differentiated knowledge base that builds upon a shared core of professional knowledge.

This formulation was formally approved in December, 1991. It was also determined that the next step of the process would be to identify the core knowledge and competencies prerequisite to entry into the profession and the specialized knowledges associated with each professional role. An enlarged and diversified professional

development work group met to begin this next phase in March, 1992.

Consistent with the plan's inclusive framework, practitioners currently working in these various roles, as well as those individuals supporting the professional development of practitioners within these specializations, were urged to participate. Approximately sixty individuals are currently working together in six groups on this effort. We have targeted the Fall of 1992 to reconvene and merge these six groups and to begin an internal, peer review process.

An Outline of the Council's Conceptualization for Early Childhood Professional Preparation and Development

The description that follows is, in essence, a blueprint for the Council's on-going work in professional development. We anticipate that it will be further refined, and perhaps revised, as our process precedes.

Our plan recognizes the distinctions of, and interdependency among, four components: (1) a representation of the profession of early childhood care and education; (2) the essential knowledge and competencies associated with professional entry into early childhood care and education and school age child care; (3) the knowledge and competencies associated with the various role options/specializations within the profession and the appropriate avenues of professional development beyond the core competencies of the various specializations, and (4) a coordinated system of professional preparation opportunities so that individuals may have equal access to the early childhood opportunities of their choice.

The proposed plan assumes that a core of knowledge and competencies should be shared by all those who professionally participate in early childhood care and education and school age child care, regardless of their professional role/specialization. Furthermore, it is believed that this core of knowledge should be a prerequisite to entry into the profession and recognition as an early childhood professional.

We further believe that different professional roles/ specializations require different amounts and kinds of professional preparation. These, in turn, may be associated with differing levels of compensation. The relationship of these professional options, however, is not hierarchial. Each role represents a distinctive professional niche in the ecosystem of early childhood care and education and school age child care. This conceptualization contrasts to a singular early childhood career ladder model which organizes the early childhood field in terms of levels and presupposes that certain roles require simply more or less versus different or specialized professional preparation. In addition, this conceptualization provides a professional configuration that assures that the desired integration of care and education for which we strive at the programmatic level also can occur at the level of professional preparation and development.

In summary, two assumptions undergird the Council's plan. The first is that early childhood educators require a shared knowledge base that provides cohesion to the profession and to our professional endeavors. Second, the field of early childhood care

and education is comprised of a variety of specializations. Each specialization is of equal importance, requires different knowledge and expertise, and may be associated with differing levels of compensation.

An individual's choice of specialization should reflect individual preferences and professional interests. Professional growth within a chosen specialization should involve enhancing the depth of one's knowledge and expertise, rather than leaving one's chosen niche to progress to another level in the hierarchy of a singular, linear career ladder. Hence, as conceived by the Council, the early childhood profession is typified by multiple career progressions.

There will, of course, be individuals who wish, because of changing professional interests and/or circumstances, to consider other specializations within the field. A coordinated system of professional preparation and development opportunities, in conjunction with the professional core knowledge base, can help assure that individuals will be able to make such career choices. We have chosen to interpret NAEYC's notion of career lattice to convey this image of interconnected role options, with opportunities to grow professionally within one's chosen specialization and/or to shift to other options.

Defining Specializations within the Early Childhood Profession

The Council's PP&D work group has delineated specializations within the field of early childhood care and education and school age child care in terms of the relationships among three defining

criteria, which are briefly explained below: developmental characteristics of the learner, professional role, and program setting. A base of core competencies, shared across all professional roles, undergirds the specializations. Knowledges and competencies beyond this basic core are differentiated among the specializations by the dynamic interplay of the criteria which shape them.

Developmental characteristics of the learner: The profession of early childhood care and education and school age child care has always been informed in significant ways by the developmental characteristics of young children. Furthermore, in moving beyond a maturational approach, the dynamic quality of individual development is now stressed. Thus, it is recognized that the children within any age range will share developmental characteristics, but they will also differ from each other because of inherent differences in personality, the environmental supports which either promote or hamper their optimal growth, and differences in physical and emotional integrity.

Professional roles: At this point in the plan's development, only those roles that involve direct interaction with children and their parents (educators and directors) are being addressed. At a future time, the plan might also consider professional roles, such as licensing staff and trainers, that support those who provide direct services to children.

Program setting: The proposed plan recognizes that program

settings are distinguished by multiple characteristics that extend beyond their physical site. The sponsorship of early childhood programs, for example, for-profit or not-for-profit, secular or religious, private or public, also shape the nature of teaching and learning that occur within their boundaries. Not all of these nuances, however, can be captured in an abstract plan or in programs of professional preparation. This acknowledgement is intended to help highlight the importance of field-based experiences that consider characteristics beyond the age of the child during professional preparation.

The specializations within the field of early childhood care and education and school age child care emerge from, and are partially defined by, the ways and extent to which they are configured by these three criteria. It is also assumed that these distinctions will have implications for extended professional development beyond the core knowledge and competencies which characterize entry into the profession.

Although all three criteria impact all the specializations, we believe the specializations to be differentially impacted by these criteria. For example, family child care has been identified as one of six specializations; its program setting, the home, has been identified as the criteria that primarily drives family child care as a specialization. The developmental characteristics of children and professional role, on the other hand, are seen as the compelling criteria in the provision of school age child care. (The role of teaching assistance has been aligned with entry into the

early childhood profession and its core knowledge.)

Professional Development within the Context of the Early Childhood System

The Council and the early childhood community in metropolitan Kansas City has already started its progress toward a comprehensive and coordinated plan for professional development. In addition to the accomplishments already described, inexpensive training opportunities offered by regional organizations included in the Council's Quarterly Training Calendar are now coded to reflect the functional areas of the CDA Competencies. Although the possibilities for this relationship have yet to be realized, the Council believes this can assist access to the CDA Credential, assist individuals in making more informed decisions about their professional development plans, and support professional development toward a CDA Credential through community training opportunities, thus formally linking resource and referral organizations into the system of professional development in metropolitan Kansas City.

The Council has also created the Early Childhood Professional Development Fund and awarded its first scholarships and program enhancement funds. This Fund is a consortium of local funders and serves as a clearinghouse for scholarship and program enhancement monies.

In addition to creating a centralized and coordinated Fund, the Council is also striving to build a substantial endowment (as part of the Fund) that will assure the early childhood professional

community an on-going source of financial support. Decisions regarding the Fund are made by a 15-member committee comprised of representatives from foundations, early childhood education, institutions of higher education, and the community-at-large. Eventually, it is hoped that this committee will be able to target professional development needs of the community in order to effect significant change. Finally, the Council's 1991-1992 Public Policy Platform takes a position of several issues that impact upon the quality of early childhood programs, in general, and professional preparation, in particular.

In conclusion, the mission of the Council is to construct a system of high quality early childhood care and education. Hence, the Council's efforts are comprehensive in focus. In addition to serving as a catalyst for the development of a comprehensive and coordinated system of professional preparation and development, it is serving a similar function in helping to conceptualize a metropolitan-wide system of resource and referral and in creating a centralized vehicle for public information and policy analysis. Because the Council is affecting systemic changes, these efforts are recognized as interrelated. It is not possible to effect change in one aspect of a system without effecting change in others. Phrased differently, because of the interdependency of the various parts of any system, the Council believes its comprehensive approach will succeed in positively effecting the lives of children and professionals in early childhood programs.